

67
Reflections on Human Life :

A
S E R M O N

Preached in

St. THOMAS's

ON

NEW-YEAR'S-DAY

MDCCLXIII.

For the Benefit of the

CHARITY-SCHOOL

In Gravel-Lane, Southwark.

By JOHN MILNER, D.D.

II. COR. XIII. 5.

Know ye not your own Selves?

Illud Trās, & c. noli putare ad arrogantiam minuendam solum esse dictum; verum etiam ut bona nostra norimus.

Cic. ad Q. Fra. 3. 6.

Published at the Request of the MANAGERS.

L O N D O N :

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(iii)

TO THE
MANAGERS
OF THE
CHARITY-SCHOOL
IN
Gravel-Lane, Southwark.

GENTLEMEN,

THE following *Sermon* was first preached, and is now published at *your Request*. I hope it will serve some Good purpose of Religion, and particularly furnish *Young Persons* with an hour's Meditation for their *Birth Day*; or the Beginning of a *New Year*.
I am

iv DEDICATION.

I am engaged in the *Education of Young Gentlemen*, and was so for some Years before I came to this *Place*. I have frequently, and I hope with some good Effect, discoursed with *Them* on those *Questions*, which you have under the *Second General Head* of the Sermon. My Design was to lead them into some Acquaintance with themselves, and those *Religious Principles*, which correspond to *inward Sense* and *Experience*.

Religion is so plainly founded in the *Original Frame and Constitution of Human Nature*, that, though it be much defaced and obscured, cannot be wholly extinguished. The most resolved and determined Sinner, who has shaken off all the Restraints of outward *Decency* and *Law*, cannot annihilate his Conscience, or extirpate his Secret Hopes and Fears. *Those* will remain

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remain within his Breast, the *irrefistible Proofs* of a *Supreme Being* and a *Future State*: Those will render it impossible, that there should be ever any such Thing as *real Atbeism* in the World. The most effectual Application therefore, which, I conceive, can be made to *Young Minds*, is to inculcate those Principles, which answer to the *natural Dictates* of Conscience; to our *natural Hopes* and *Fears*; and those other *Affections*, which influence *Moral Conduct*. Our Instructions in this Case will not be merely founded on *Authority*, but *inward Sense* and *Feeling*. Every Conviction of Duty will appear still more *rational* and *obliging*, as we perceive it owned and approved by the *Reflections* of our own *Minds*. When we thus learn *the Origin of Things*, *what we ourselves are*, and *for what Life we are*

VI DEDICATION.

are Born: * Then the Principles of *Revealed Religion* will appear in their just *Beauty* and *Propriety*. We shall admire their Excellency and Suitableness; and rejoice to see how happily they conspire to relieve the Wants and Miseries of *Fallen Creatures*.

I pray God to prosper the *School* under your Direction, and reward all your *Labours of Love*. I am with Esteem,

Gentlemen,

Your Obliged

Humble Servant,

Peckham—Surry

Jan. 29. 1742-3

J. M.

* *Discite, O Miseri, & causas cognoscite rerum;
Quid sumus, & quidnam victuri gignimur;
Quis datus.* _____

[Ordo

Pers. Sat. 3. 66.

(I)
We have in the Book of Ecclesiastes
the result of Solomon's inquiry after Happiness. He had considered the various
Scenes of human Life, examined every
Object, and stated its value; and assured
us upon his own experience, that worldly
Riches, Honour, and Pleasure, can never
render us completely Happy. There was
a Vanity in them, which would receive our
Hopes, and a Vexation attending them,
that would defeat them. He declares that
on this Subject, He declares that
MAN, an inquisitive Creature, not
contented with useful and plain
things, often attempts unlawful
heights, and pries into forbidden Secrets.
He is bold in inquiry, and curious to un-
derstand the condition and circumstances
of all other Beings, but HIMSELF
— HIMSELF, a Secret, and yet the
greatest Wonder in all the visible creation.
Give me leave to turn your thoughts in-
ward upon yourselves, and present you
with a Subject too little studied, and
known; namely, Human Nature. I
would make some Reflections upon its
present State; its Existence and Opportu-
nities, suitable to the beginning of a
NEW YEAR; and those Objects of
CHARITY, you have before you—
A Time to be born.

B

We

We have in this Book of *Ecclesiastes* the result of *Solomon's* inquiry after *Happiness*. He had considered the various Scenes of *human Life*; examined every Object, and stated its value; and assures us, upon his own Experience, that worldly *Riches, Honour, and Pleasure*, can never render us completely Happy. There was a *Vanity* in them, that would deceive our Hopes, and a *Vexation* attending them, that would destroy our Peace. As he goes on with this Subject, He declares those *Principles* on which we might securely build, and derive from them as much Satisfaction as this imperfect world can afford. One of those *Principles* is a DIVINE PROVIDENCE, and the special influence, it has on all *Events*; *to every thing there is a Season, and a Time to every purpose under Heaven*, chap. iii. 1. q. d.

“ As *Plants and Trees* have their proper
 “ Season for *growth and maturity*: so *Events*
 “ have their *respective Opportunities* assigned
 “ them, by an infinitely *wise and all per-*
 “ *fect Mind*; and This amongst others the
 “ *Time of our Existence—A Time to be*
 “ *born.*

The Subject well deserves our Consideration; especially as it will lead us to an useful piece of *Knowledge*, which uses to be either postponed, or gained by many dan-

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dangerous Experiments, I mean the *Knowledge of our Selves*—In speaking to it,

- 1 I would observe, that the *Time of our Existence is under the special care and direction of Providence.*
- 2 I would make some useful *Reflections on Human Nature; its Constitution and Opportunities.*
- 3 I would endeavour some *improvement suitable to the Occasion of our meeting.*

I. I observe that the *Time of our Existence is under the special care, and direction of Providence.*

It is not conceivable how any creature should *subsist or act* independent of the *Supreme Cause*; any more than give it self *Being* at first. And since *direction* seems necessary to preserve *Harmony and Order* both in the *natural and moral World*, it is reasonable to ascribe to *Providence* an *universal Superintendency*; either in *permitting Events*, or *directing and limiting* their influence. This implies no more than the *interposition of a Power*, which might prevent *confusion and disorder* in the *works of God.*

As to Man, we must allow that every one born into the World is capable of affecting the comfort and rights of others: And that *more or less* according to the Power he obtains; the Passions he indulges; and the Interests he pursues. The good order, and quiet of Life require, that the *Existence* of such an *Agent* should be determined. Since he is likely to have an influence beyond Himself, his time of *Action* should be considered amongst other *Reasons* and *Measures* of Government, i. e. *Every Man's Time to be born.*

No one, *I apprehend*, can doubt of this as to the Existence of some *Extraordinary Persons*, raised up to be *instruments* of *Providence*, and destined to some special service——No one can doubt of this, as to Men's *outward conditions*. Here *Providence* evidently interposes; raises up and casts down; directs to a low station, or to stand in the foremost rank. By this *diversity of Characters* the union of Mankind is strengthened, and they are laid under an happy necessity of exchanging good offices.——No one can doubt whether this *one circumstance* of our *Birth* be adjusted, or not, viz. the *Numbers* of *Males* and *Females* to be born.——When, finally, things less considerable, the *Fowls* of the air; the *Flowers* of the

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the field; and the *hairs* of our head are taken care of, we may be confident the *time* of our *Existence* must be equally the Object of *Divine Care*.

The *Scriptures* lead us into the very same acknowledgments of our *dependence* upon God. *Before we are Born*, our *imperfect Substance* is under his Eye, and our *unfinished members* are written in his *Book*.^a After we are born, 'tis claimed as his *Prerogative* to appoint the *Bounds* of our *Habitation*;^b to dispose of our *Opportunities*, *my times are in thy hand*;^c to concur to every moment of our *Existence*, for in Him we live move and have our *Being*.^d — Neither doth this *doctrine* establish any *FATE* upon us; because it is not the direction of an *Arbitrary Being*: but of *ONE*, who always acts according to the counsel of his own *Will*. Of One who acts steadily with a view to *Moral Ends*. Consequently, if He had seen it *Fit*, He might have given us our *Time to be born*, sooner or later; in a former or succeeding Age.

“ I am convinced then, that the *Time* of my *Existence* is not the object of my own *Knowledge* or *Choice*; nor the Effect

^a Psa. cxxxix. 15, 16. ^b Acts xvii. 26. ^c Psa. xxi. 15. ^d Acts xvii. 18. Eph. i. 11.

“fect of any supposed CHANCE,
 “which is only a Name for *Nothing* :
 “but the Appointment of *One* infinitely
 “WISE—I proceed

II. To make some useful Reflections on
 Human Nature; its Constitution and
 Opportunities.

That I am is one of the *earliest* and
strongest convictions of the *Mind*. How-
 soever we may be tempted to *doubt* of
 other Things, we cannot of our own *Ex-*
istence; because the very *Power of doubt-*
ing will confirm it the more. 'Tis a *con-*
viction that breaks in at every Sense; we
 feel it in every *Pleasure* and *Pain*. But to
 what purpose *This*, if at the same time I
 live a perfect stranger to my *Heart*.—

KNOW THY SELF is a piece of
 Wisdom, which the *Heathens* thought wor-
 thy to come from *Heaven*: necessary not
 only to discover our *abilities*; but check
 that *Pride* and *Vanity*, which uses to be so
 hurtful to us.† The *Apostle* speaks of it with
 some Surprize, that any *Christians* should
 be liable to be charged with Self-ignorance.
What know ye not your own Selves?‡

“Enquire then, O my Soul, into thy
 “Self. Why so inquisitive to know *Men*
 “and

† Vid. Title-page. § 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

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“ and *Business*; to study *Arts* and *Scien-*
 “ *ces*; to become acquainted with the
 “ *customs* and *manners* of *foreign Coun-*
 “ *tries*, whilst thy *Self*, thy own *Heart*
 “ remains a *Terra incognita* to Thee?
 “ Shall this be the only Subject not wor-
 “ thy of thy cultivation, and regard?
 “ Let me then for a while lose every
 “ other Object, and look into my *self*.
 “ Do Thou, O *Father of Lights*, and
 “ fountain of all *Truth*, guide my in-
 “ *quiries*, and seal the impression of
 “ every *Truth* upon my Heart.—The
 following **QUESTIONS** will lead my
 thoughts into some *method* and *order*.

i. . . . What am I ?

i. e. How made? How naturally
 endowed for *Existence*?—I find this
 SELF, a composition of *Body* and *Soul*:
 Parts very different from one another,
 and by which I am allied to creatures ve-
 ry distant in the Scale of Beings To
Angels of light; or creeping *Worms* of
 the Earth. * In this surprizing Frame I
 meet with *something* to excite my admi-
 ration

* *Nostra omnis vis in animo et corpore sita est.*
Animi imperio, corporis servitio magis utimur: al-
terum nobis cum Dis; alterum cum Belluis com-
mune est. Sall. b. Cat. 1.

ration and gratitude: *Something* to mortify my Pride, and humble my Heart.

1) My BODY is taken from the *common dust*:^h but 'tis *dust* refined; curiously modified and framed to discharge the functions of *Animal Life*. In the great variety of its Parts, I see nothing *Superfluous*; and to serve a greater variety of *uses*, nothing *wanting*. Here my *Senses*, and *Appetites*, have their *Seat*, depending upon a *different Structure* of Parts; and my *Passions* communicate their force, being attended with a *different flow* of the Blood and Spirits. Those prompt me either to repair the continual waste of *Animal Nature*, or guard it from external injuries.—But then this *Body* is a feeble Frame, and subject to innumerable *Frailties* and *disorders*. It has the *Seeds of Misery and Death* latent in it, which will prevail in some Shape or other, and *dissolve* this curious piece of *Mechanism*.

2) My SOUL has a nobler *origin* and *make*. It is from God himself, created in his NATURAL IMAGE,^k *Spiritual, Rational, and Rector* of this lower world; and *particularly distinguished* by a power of *Consciousness* and *Reflection*. By this the *Soul* is qualified to

reflect

^h Gen. ii. 7.

Gen. ii. 7. Job xxxiii. 8.

^k Gen. i. 26.

reflect upon it *self*, and its own Operations; to contemplate the *nature* and *relations* of things; admire the *wonders* of Creation, and range through all its various scenes, from World to World. Without this *Power* Existence would be no *Pleasure*, and the mere perception of Things of no *use*. From hence results that MORAL SENSE, or *apprehension* of the *difference* of things, of *Good* and *Evil*, of *Virtue* and *Vice*, which has the force of a LAW and *Rule of Action* in us: a *Law*, says the Apostle, *written in the Heart*.¹ — My conformity to this *Law*; to the pure and uncorrupted *dictates* of my Mind, is VIRTUE. And when this becomes *habitual* and *prevailing* it will discover the MORAL IMAGE of God in the Soul. Put on the new Man, which after God, is created in Righteousness, and true Holiness.^m

From this View of the *constituent parts* of my *Nature*, I must conclude, that the *Powers* and *Pleasures* of the *Body* are of a kind inferior to *those* of the *Soul*; without any *Moral discernment* in themselves; and therefore that they ought to be in *Subjection* to the *Law of my Mind*; that their *Objects* might be *chosen*, and their *Force regulated*.

C

3) Our

¹ Rom. ii. 14, 15. ^m Eph. iv. 24.

3) Our kind Creator, in the affair of our duty and Happiness, did not leave us to the mere power of Reason; but furnished us with certain other Affections, designed originally to give us a natural Bias and Tendency towards them*: such as rise up many times without our choice and direction; namely——A Love of Truth. We see this in Young Minds, who are greatly abashed when they find themselves either mistaken, or deceived. And it must be as natural to an intelligent Being to Love Truth, as to Desire Knowledge.——Benevolence, or a wishing well to others. So much Tenderneſs is wrought into a Human Heart, that we are disposed, before we are aware, to Sympathize with others; to share in the Events which befall them, i. e. to rejoice with those that rejoice; and weep with those that weep.^a Hence Pity, Compassion, and those other indications of a kind Temper, which enter into the notion of HUMANITY.——An Inclination to Society: To assemble with our fellow creatures, not only from Motives of self Preservation;

* Nunc parvulos nobis dedit igniculos, quos celeriter malis moribus opiniobusque depravati sic reſtinguimus, ut nuſquam naturæ lumen appareat. Sunt enim ingeniis noſtris ſemina innata virtutum; quæ ſi adoleſcere liceret, ipſa nos ad beatam vitam natura perduceret. Cic. Tuſ. 3. 1.

^a Rom. xii. 15.

tion ; but to *enlarge* our Pleasures and Enjoyments by a *free communication* of Sentiments.——A *Sense of shame*, which follows an *indecent action*, or the doing what we apprehend will *sink* us in the *Esteem* of others. This is an *Affection* which prepares us to pay an early *Regard* to the *Judgment* and *Experience* of others, and becomes afterwards a *Spring* of great and laudible *Designs*.——Finally ; CONSCIENCE, or that judgment which a Man passes upon his own Actions: *His Thoughts*, says the Apostle, *accusing*, or *excusing* them.^o This inward Judgment is usually followed, with a *secret joy* or *dejection* ; with the *Hope* or *Dread* of a *Superior Being*. And from hence it is evident, *to the confusion and terror of all wicked Men*, that a LAW, a LAWGIVER, and JUDGE^e are Principles naturally connected.

Those *Affections* are not owing to *Custom*, or *Institution* ; but are found in the *Barbarian*, as well as *Greek* ; in the *Poor* as well as *Rich* : *Affections* which may be *perverted*, or *overruled* by *contrary inclinations* ; but not totally eradicated out of the Heart. Consequently, there will be, in all our sober intervals, an *inward Testimony* and *Approbation* given to Religion ;

C 2

and

^o Rom. ii. 15.^e Isa. xxxiii. 22.

and many times against the force of our vicious Prejudices.

4) The *Body* and *Soul* are joined together by *secret* and *surprizing* Ties: So closely united, that they *mutually* affect one another, and share in each other's pleasures and complaints.

Where the *Agent* is *One*, we might expect to find an easy *Subordination* of Powers. Where the *Interest* is *common*, we might look for nothing less than *Harmony* and *Peace*. But contrary to all this, we find an *Unnatural Strife** between the *Flesh* and the *Spirit* between the *Animal* and *Rational* Powers, or in the language of the Apostle *between the Law in the members, and the Law of the mind.*^a The *Balance* of the *Soul* does not fall so readily to the *Rational Side*, as seems necessary in an intelligent Being, designed for a *Character* of *Virtue* and *Happiness*. Our *Propensions* to *sensible Good* are very *strong*; and when *This* appears, we find it *easy* to follow our *first inclinations*, without waiting for the cool deliberations of *Reason*; and as *painful* and *difficult* to resist them. Those strong *impulses* of *Carnal Appetite* must give the *Temptations* to *Sin*, taken from

* Αυγρη γὰρ συνοπαδὲς Ἐρις βλάπτουσα λείπειν
Συμφυλῆς. — Aur. Carm. 59.

^a Rom. vii. 23. Gal. v. 17.

from *sensible Good*, a greater advantage over us, and *prepare* us to embrace them; nay we find them succeed many times against our better Judgment. This I conceive is what is meant by our *Proneness to Sin*: our facility and readiness to close with those Temptations, which lead to Sin. And for this reason it should be our continual Prayer, *Lead us not into Temptation.*

A change in a man's outward circumstances may expose his *Virtue* to greater trials and dangers; may put him in a *Situation*, wherein it would be more difficult to keep himself from Sin. We have an equal disadvantage within us, from the *Law of our members warring against the Law of our Mind.*¹

Every thing will increase this disadvantage which either serves to divert our attention,

¹ Ita ut ingenium est omnium hominum a labore proclive ad lubricitatem. Ter. And. I. I. 50. . . . Homo, non ut a matre, sed ut a noverca, natura editus est in vitam corpore nudo, et fragili, et infirmo: animo autem anxio ad molestias, humili ad timores, molli ad labores, prono ad libidines; in quo tamen inest, tanquam obrutus, quidam divinus ignis Ingenii, et Mentis. Cic. de Repub. 3. inter Fragm. . . . Ad deteriora faciles sumus; quia nec dux potest, nec comes deesse; et res etiam ipsa sine duce, sine comite procedit. Non primum est tantum ad vitia, sed præcepta. Senec. Ep. 97. . . .

Quoniam dociles imitandis Turpibus, ac pravis omnes sumus. Juv. Sat. 14. 40.

¹ Rom. vii. 23.

tention, or destroy our *caution* in the conduct of our Selves; *namely*, the laborious methods of Life; the care of Families; the slavish fear of Death. . . . *As also*, the maturity of Sense, before Reason; the corrupt Examples, and false notions of Happiness, which sometimes prejudice us *very early* in Life. * *Animal Nature*, so potent and assisted by those things, must greatly *disturb* the Operations of Reason, and suppress its *power*. In such a Composition of *mixed Powers*, reluctant to one another, we could expect nothing less, than what has happened, *Human Nature* sinking into *Indolence* and *Darkness*; into *Circumstances*, wherein it could reach but a *very low degree* of *Virtue* or *Happiness*, without divine Assistance.

We could not, *certainly*, come out of our Maker's hands so *impotent* in every thing, but our Passions. *Human Nature* could not have *originally* those jarring Principles and be such a perfect *Contrast* to it self. . . . to approve *Virtue*, and yet reach it

with
 * Nunc autem, simul atque editi in lucem, et suscepti sumus, in omni continuo pravitate, et in summa opinionum perversitate versamur: ut pæne cum lacte nutricis errorem suxisse videamur. Cum vero parentibus redditi, demum magistris traditi sumus, tum ita variis imbuimur erroribus, ut vanitati veritas, et opinioni confirmatae natura ipsa cedat. Cic.
 Tus. 3. 1.

with difficulty to desire Happiness, and yet miss it to fear Pain, and yet feel it to love Life, and yet to be in continual fear of Death. From all which it seems reasonable to conclude that *Something* has been introduced to disturb the *Primitive Order* of Things.

The *Heathens* had always some notion of This Matter.—But the *Best Account* of it we have in the *History* of the FALL. *Adam* our natural Head by his SIN forfeited the free Favours and Bounties of his Creator; corrupted his Nature, encreasing his Animal Propensions; and subjected himself to *Misery* and *Death*, neither of them felt or feared before. Such as he was himself, such must his Offspring be whom he begat in his own image of weakness and misery. For as is the Root, so are the Branches; and none can bring a clean thing out of an unclean.—It is besides my purpose to enter further into this Subject; only I would observe that we ought to distinguish between the *Excellence* of our Nature and its *Corruption*, that we might not think God the Author of the one, as well as the other. God is not to be accused, because a *Constitution* of Wisdom and Goodness has been violated; nor is he obliged to prevent the natural effect and consequence of such a Constitution: Our Na-
tures

tures, as corrupted, are no more from Him, than those *distempered Natures* are now, which men's *vices* bring upon them, or entail upon their *Posterity* to many Generations.

“ Oh! may I impress my *Heart* with
 “ a Sense of those Things, to check its
 “ *Vanity*, and keep it depending. . . .
 “ Thus let me humbly view the *Ruins*,
 “ which Sin has Occasioned: That I
 “ might honour *the Repairer* of those
 “ *Breaches*, and Exalt the glories of my
 “ REDEEMER—I proceed to En-
 quire.

ii. . . . Whence am I?

I could not go through the precedeing *Question*, without giving some hint of the Author of my Being; yet it may have its Use to enter particularly into this Meditation. *How came I first to exist?*

If I look back but a *Few Years* I find my Observations very few and imperfect: If I go further back still, I am lost in *Darkness*. From whence I conclude, that there was a time once, *When I was not*. How came I then to be? It will not satisfy the *Question* to say, that I came into the World just as others do; that I was born a helpless Infant &c. My Parents may

Isa. lviii. 12.

be the *Instruments*, but cannot be the *Causes* of my Being. 'Tis beyond the reach of their Knowledge and Capacity to create a human Frame.

Since I must *therefore* look further than those, where can I direct my thoughts, but to Him, who raised and beautified this stupendous World——*He that created the Heavens and stretched them out; He that spread forth the Earth, and that which cometh forth out of it; It is He that giveth Breath to the People upon it, and Spirit to them that walk therein.**

This *Supreme Principle* and all *Perfect Mind* I adore as the Author of my Being. My Existence was his *Gift* as the Continuance of it is his *Care*. 'Tis *natural* to aspire to my Original; to think of Him who gave me the Power of thinking; 'Tis *reasonable* to own his Right in me, who has endowed me with every natural Advantage; and to excite in my Soul every Affection that may give him *Praise*. Particularly,

1) To admire his *Wisdom*. *I will praise Thee for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;* the Body with such Design in the Structure and Disposition of every little *Vein, Muscle, and Bone* as strikes me with Astonishment; the Soul with such a vast
D Capacity

* Isa. xlii. 5. y Psa. cxxxix. 14.

Capacity of Reason and Intelligence, as give me a preeminence above all the Creatures in this lower World. *This is God my Maker, who teacheth me more than the Beasts of the Earth, and maketh me wiser than the Fowls of Heaven.*^a Shall I admire a curious Piece of Art, an ingenious mechanical Design, and yet feel no pleasing Surprise at that *Miracle of Wisdom*, which I carry about me? Thee I will extoll, *My Creator*, unsearchable in thy Ways, and inimitable in thy Works.

2) To acknowledge his *Goodness* and *Bounty*. If he has done more for me than other Creatures, I should be more observant of him, and find a Pleasure in the exactest Recollection of his Benefits. *Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits!*^a How am I surrounded with the present *marks* of his Favour! All Nature is designed to contribute to my Service and Comfort; the *Light* of Heaven to cheer me; the *Rain* to make the Earth fruitful for my Sustenance; *Government* and *Publick Order* maintained that I might have a quiet Habitation: Every Day my Life is crowned with new Blessings.— Shall I not magnify Him in whom I thus live, move, and have my Being?^b I will magnify

^a Job xxxv. 11. ^a Psa. ciii. 2. ^b Acts xvii. 28.

magnify him and his *Goodness* and testify it, by an *absolute Reliance* and *Trust*. I will cast myself upon his *Allmighty Protection*, and resign to his kind and wise *Disposals*.

3) To know him who is the *most amiable Pattern* of Life; the *Best* of all excellent Beings; the *wisest* of all intelligent Natures; *all beautiful* in Holiness. Can I love him and not endeavour to be like him? Yes, this will I endeavour, and thus refine my Nature; because to be like God is true Liberty and Perfection. Whilst I imitate his *Purity* I shall gain some *Taste* of his *Happiness*; and whilst I am conscious of doing every thing that will *please* God, I shall find a *new Spring* of Comfort rising up in my Soul. Thus let my Years roll on whilst I grow more Holy, Spiritual, and Divine; and become in my *Degree* and *Measure*, *Perfect as my heavenly Father is Perfect*.

4) *And Lastly*; To enjoy Him as my *Chief Happiness*. The Gratifications of *Sense* are low; the Pleasures of *Sin* defiling and discouraging; the *World* a transitory Glory; all those things cannot *fill*, or *satisfy*, an Immortal Spirit. Our Desires will either return or remain in their full Strength after we have ransacked the whole World;

D 2

they

they will urge us with new Importunities and convince us that Happiness rises not from hence——He that is the *Author* of my Being must be the *Object* of my *Happiness*, whose *Favour*, as the Psalmist says, is *better than Life*.^a Without a *Sense* of his *Favour*, and an *Interest* in his *Perfections*, Life is but a *dark Line* from one *End* to the other; A meer *Impertinence*. In God there is every thing to render me easy and safe; in him all *Excellency* and *Good* to make me happy. He is able to do for me more than I can *ask* and satisfy me beyond all that I can *conceive*. This then, *O my Soul*, is the *Center* of thy *Rest*!

“ *O my God*, let nothing bound my *Desires*, or stay my *Affections*, but the
 “ fullest *Enjoyment* of thy *Presence* and
 “ *Love*! If *Earthly Parents* challenge our
 “ *Reverence*, *Esteem*, and *Gratitude*, who
 “ are only *Instruments* of *Life* in thy
 “ *Hands*, how much do I owe to Thee,
 “ the *Great Author* and *Immediate Cause*
 “ of my *Life* and *Happiness*! Could I
 “ know every thing besides thy *Self*, un-
 “ derstand all the *Mysteries* of *Nature*
 “ and *Art*; command the *Pleasures* of
 “ *Sense*; all would avail me nothing,
 “ whilst I remained ignorant of thy *Self*,
 “ my

" my sovereign Lord, my supreme Friend,
 " and Immortal Portion.

iii. . . . For what am I ?

Did I never put this *Question* seriously to my self before ? Have I been designing *this*, and the *other* End to my self in the various scenes of life, and never once considered to what End *my self* was designed ? Should I come into the World for I know not what, and go out of it I know not whither ? No——My *Creator* is wise, and this *Furniture* of Powers and Faculties, he has given me, must be for some great Ends, worthy of himself, and their Excellency and Use; wherefore

i) I was made for VIRTUE; to maintain a *right Order* in my affections and behaviour; to *deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts*; to live *soberly, righteously, and godly in the present World.* This notion of *Virtue* takes in the *whole compass* of my Duty, which I naturally owe to God, my Self, and Fellow-Creatures; and is summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments. For *this End* I must be made, because I have a *Law* and *Rule* in my own breast directing me to it; and my *natural Conscience* owns every *Obligation* resulting from it——I am not then

then made a mere *Animal* to eat, drink, and sleep, and run from one gay Scene of Sense to another. The objects of Sense must be chosen and their force governed by a *superior Law*. Let me aim then at *Satisfactions* more *rational* and *sublime*, even the *pleasures* of *Truth* and *Goodness*. Those of Sense are as transient as the superficial touches of a Nerve and soon die away. Animal Nature cannot bear long the same application or enjoyment without *Dullness* or *Disappointment*: But the *Pleasures* of *Truth* and *Virtue* improve with *Exercise*, and grow in *Reflection*.—

Let me then abhor every degree of *Intemperance*, *Luxury*, and *Sensuality* as oppressive to this one *End* for which I was made; and whatever *Character* I assume, let me be consistent with it, by a *propriety* of *Behaviour*; then I shall enjoy the growing pleasures of Religion, and my Life will not languish away a *Burthen* to my self, or *useless* and *injurious* to others.

2) I was made for HAPPINESS. This properly follows the other, because *Virtue* has a direct tendency to secure the *Peace* and *Comfort* of Mankind; and, its opposite, *Vice* is the Source of most of those *Miseries* we complain of. I cannot question whether this be an *End* of my Being, when I consider God, or my self.

—God

—God is *Allsufficient*, and was so before any creature existed, and therefore could want no Contributions from them, to make him more happy; and if so, what other motive could He have, worthy of himself, to give Being to a Creature, He wanted nothing from, unless it were to communicate some portion of his own *Goodness* and *Happiness*—I find my self so framed that I am carried towards *Happiness* with the *whole weight* of my Soul. Every Faculty, every Passion, and every Sense has a taste for it. Is my Creator cruel, or can he find a *pleasure* in the *Disappointment* and *Torture* of his Creature? No. Happiness must be the original *Design* of my Being—But where is *Happiness*—After all is this nothing but *Fiction* and *Dream*? Is Happiness something I must see, but never possess; desire, but never enjoy? Can I be happy, while so many *real evils* oppress me? Can I tell which is Happiness, when so many *false lights* rise up to deceive me into *vain Expectations*? Whilst I find my self such a *frail, variable, and sinful* creature Happiness flies from me; and therefore I must believe *Sin*, which shut up Paradise, has removed my Happiness at a distance, and prevented this World from producing so fair a *Flower*.

This

This is not my rest because it is polluted.
 — Let me then have the *Wisdom* and *Resolution* to despise all the flattering Proposals of Happiness here. Let it be my *utmost Ambition* to live *conscious* of my own Integrity; *satisfied* with my self, and my present condition; *guarded* by a firm confidence in God, and *content* to wait for *complete Happiness*, till the other world shall reveal it.

3) I was made for SOCIETY. The Bias of Nature draws powerfully this way, and *Inclination* anticipates *Reason*. So the Creator from a view of man pronounced it *not Good that he should be alone.*^s I find those *kind* and *benevolent* propensions within, which carry me to compassionate the Miserable; to rejoice in the communications of Friendship; and find a *delight* in giving others *delight*——O may I ever cherish this Temper, and support *Truth*, *Justice*, and *Peace*, the firm *Basis* of Society! Since this is the *End* of my Being, I will neither *repine* at the Advantages, nor *rejoice* at the Misfortunes of others; but live so, that all may hope to find in me a *Common Friend*. I will carefully guard my *heart* from being the *Theatre* of *Envy*, *Hatred*, and *sullen Malice*, lest they should envenom my *tongue* with bitterness, or direct my *hand* with cruelty against my *Fellow-Creatures*.

4) I

^f Mich. ii. 10

^g Gen. ii. 18.

4) I was made for GOD. Every *Agent* has some view to himself in his Works; God has to his *own Glory*. His *Glory* is the *manifestation* of his Perfections; and when we answer the End for which we were made, and return him that *Veneration, Gratitude, and Praise* which his Excellencies deserve, *we glorify him*. No Creature but man is capable of paying him this *Homage*, and therefore He claims a particular Interest in the *Rational World*. *All Souls are mine.*^b What is said of *Israel*, in a particular view of Providence, is true of *every man* in an important sense. . . . *I have created him for my Glory*. . . . My Duty then is to preserve a *Sense of God* in the world, as well as in my own breast. And since nothing does this, so much as *Publick Worship*, I will be always ready to give him this *open Testimony* of my *Esteem and Gratitude*. I will not be *ashamed* to praise him for his Goodness, or pray to him for the continuance of it. *Those occasions* shall be always welcome to me, for recollecting the *Divine Presence and Truth*; for warming those Affections, which are apt to cool amidst the Amusements and Cares of Life. I will welcome the Day when I shall appear before God, and *publickly* acknowledge

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ledge

Ezek. xviii. 4.

Isai. xliii. 7.

ledge my self a Creature infinitely obliged to him.

Those are *Ends* worthy of my Being and my Creator. I would ever keep them in my Eye and bind them close upon my Heart, that I may never prostitute my self to mean, low, and wicked purposes. Let others pursue the *Shadows of Pomp and Greatness*. Let others sweat and toil for the conveniences of Fortune; this is my *Great Concern* and deserves all my Attention. I shall be *Great* enough if I am *Virtuous*; and *Wise* enough if I can secure the *Divine Presence and Friendship*.

iv. . . . What helps have I?

What *Assistance* and *Encouragements* for attaining those *Ends* of my Being? In our present *Fallen State* we certainly want them. We are naturally *Indolent*, and had rather go on in a *beaten track*, than apply our own Faculties to the Search of Truth. *Sense* and *appetite* are strong; there are many *free Favours* forfeited; and many *real Evils* introduced. We are conscious of *Personal Sin*, and fearful of God's Displeasure on that account.

In such *Circumstances* we want help to accomplish our minds answerable to their capacities; or reach any good Degree of *Virtue* and *Happiness*. We want *Deliverance* from

from our *frailties* and *fears*; to be rescued from the Prejudice of *Error*; to be *reconciled* to God; and *guided* with Safety and Comfort through the trials and hazards of the present State.——*Blessed be God* such Help as this is provided for us.——Here the *Glories* of the Gospel rise up before me; and my *Redeemer* shines in all the Excellencies of his *Covenant* and *Grace*. What the *Son of God* has done for us is abundantly sufficient to answer every *Want*, and dispel every *Fear*. For

1) He has thrown a *new Light* upon all the *Ends* of our Being; discovered them more fully; and carried us towards them by more *effectual Motives* and *Considerations*.

——With respect to *Virtue* He has given us the most lovely Representation of it in his Doctrine; commands it in such Instances of *Humility*, *Meekness*, and *Forgiving* of Enemies as enlarges its foundation; and directed it upon such principles as refine its nature.

——In the affair of *Happiness* he has corrected our wrong Opinions about it, and opened *one* to our view that is *lovely*, *great*, and *everlasting*.——In regard to *Society* he

has established it on the solid pillars of *Truth* and *Justice*; recommended every *friendly Office*; discountenanced all those passions which disturb the *Quiet* of the World.——

He has revealed the *Supreme Being* under the endearing titles of a *Father*, *Friend*, and

Comforter ; the *Fountain* of Goodness, most worthy to be loved ; of *Wisdom* and *Power*, fit to be trusted ; so *Holy* that he cannot be reconciled to Sinners without *Repentance* ; nor enjoyed by them without an inward Principle of *Sanctification* ; such a Lover of *Truth* that none can serve him acceptably without *Purity* and *Integrity* of heart.

Those things our *Saviour* has explained with great Goodness and Condescension, and offered *new motives* to draw us to them. Such, for *Instance*, as his own *Example* and *Love* ; the Promises and Privileges of his Kingdom ; and, *finally*, such as are taken from the discoveries he has made into another World, than which nothing can be more *desirable* or more *dreadful*. They only want to be considered to have their *Weight*, and to be brought in view, to be a proper *counterpoise* to the temptations of the *Devil*, *Flesh*, and *World*. Thus would our *Blessed Saviour* rescue us from Error, and weaken the power of *indwelling Corruption*.

2) He has promised his *blessed Spirit* to assist us in our Duty. How the Impression can be made, or Strength conveyed unto our Faculties is a piece of Knowledge more *curious*, than useful. However we may assure ourselves it is done in such a manner, as not to *over power* our Faculties, or destroy *Moral Agency*. For in that case all

all our actions would become *necessary* neither rewardable nor punishable. God assists us in the common methods of his *Providence*, but still congruous to the nature he has given us, and though we do not know *How*, yet we do not think that a sufficient reason for disbelieving it. It is sufficient for us that *Grace* is promised, and we may well trust a Friend with the Dispensation of it. *O mighty Relief* to our fallen Natures! When so many Difficulties surround me, and I know not how to proceed with any *Steadiness* and *Comfort*, then how encouraging to find myself *Strong in the Lord and in the power of his Might!*^k

— I am apt to *forget* those Considerations which should *quicken* me and keep up the *Ardor* of my Resolutions. How encouraging to hope that this *Friendly Monitor* will suggest them to my mind, and fix my Attention to them in the *tenderest Season!*

Almighty Grace, assist my Duty and render the doing of it pleasing; *establish* my weak inconstant heart, and *confine* my wandering Desires. Here I will depend for *aid* and acknowledge my *Sufficiency of God!*^l

3) He has offered *Pardon* to believing *Penitents*. Whatever hope *true Penitency* may

^k Eph. vi. 10. ^l 2 Cor. iii. 5.

may conceive from the Goodness of God, yet under Guilt we do not always discover a Disposition to Repentance. *Guilt* makes us shy and fearful of God, and we seem rather willing to *excuse* than *confess* our faults.—— Besides, we cannot say that God is *necessarily* obliged to forgive us being *Penitent*. A *future good action* cannot alter the real nature of a *former bad one*. It was a Crime, an act of Rebellion, and of ill Example; and our *Penitency* cannot destroy one of those Circumstances. God might therefore have punished it, had he seen it fitting.

It must further increase this doubt, if the Sin in question has been *often repeated*, and has had a very ill effect upon ourselves, or others. So that weighing *all Circumstances*, the hope which the Penitent derive from the Goodness of God, cannot be so *clear, firm, and effectual* a ground of Hope as that which arises from the *full and express Promises* of the Gospel.

In *Consideration* of what Christ has *done and suffered* Penitent Believers are assured their *great, their many Sins* shall be forgiven. No Sinner is excluded from Hope; the Pardon will be full and the Reconciliation entire. *We have Redemption through his Blood even the forgiveness of Sin.* Nay,

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we are told that in this method of shewing mercy, God has *abounded in all Wisdom and Prudence*. His *Wisdom* appears in this affair as well as his *Goodness*, and wherein can *This* more properly shew it self than in *directing* on what *consideration*, and in what *manner* this *Mercy* should be offered to us? We have no reason to hesitate about this method of conveying mercy in *consideration* of another's Merits and Righteousness, because the *Benefit* of *Christ's Righteousness*, and Obedience unto death, does not in the least excuse our own *Personal Righteousness*, or weaken the least obligation we are under to Virtue and Goodness.

I acknowledge then *the Riches of Grace* offered through a Mediator. I adore the Wisdom of it too, as a proper vindication of the divine *Holiness* and *Government*, and a suitable discovery of the *Evil* and *Danger* of *Sin*. By this *Sacrifice for sin*, there is a *standing Condemnation of Sin to the world*. I will not presume to say that God could have taken *no other method*; but this is the *method* which He has taken, and therefore I esteem it the *fittest* and *best*. I would be for ever thankful that I am put upon such a solid ground of *Hope*, and am under a *Covenant of Repentance and Life*, which admits of *Sincerity* instead

of Perfection, and gives every Sinner hope, but the *obstinate* and *incorrigible*.

A *Sense of Sin* is apt to deject the Mind, to distress and fill it with *dark* and *gloomy* thoughts, but here is the reviving word, *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins shall be forgiven.* Let me then prize this Truth. It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save Sinners.¹

4) He has abolished Death and brought Life and Immortality to Light.² Not so abolished it, as to exempt us from dying, but from continuing always under the Power of Death. He has made void the Perpetuity of the original sentence, so that now as in Adam all dye so in Christ shall all be made alive.³ All shall rise, but with this difference in the prospects of Things, the *Virtuous* and *Good* shall rise to Life, i. e. Happiness; the *wicked* to Destruction.⁴ The Friends of Jesus shall receive the *first Honours* of the rising day.⁵ Their *frail, corrupt, mortal* Bodies shall rise with new Qualities of *Vigour, Beauty, and Immortality.*⁶

Surprizing Goodness! That a Sentence of Death justly deserved should be reversed;
a for-

¹ 1 Tim. i. 15. ² 2 Tim. i. 10. ³ 1 Cor. xv. 22. ⁴ John y. 29. ⁵ 1 Thess. iv. 16. ⁶ 1 Cor. xv. 42.

a forfeited Life restored with so much Advantage; and my very Body improved and adorned. I shall then struggle no more with those contrary inclinations. My Soul shall be no more clouded, harassed, and endangered by this animal corrupt nature. It will then be refined and better fitted as an Instrument to act by.

Transcending Goodness! That the prospect of my Happiness should be extended beyond the ruins of Time and the World; and the Greatness of it be beyond the proportion of the exactest Virtue. Eternal Life! O boundless prospect, beyond the power of imagination to reach! That Life indeed is only worth the name of Living, where no Dullness or Pain shall ever disturb its Activity; no Sorrow alloy its Enjoyment; no Death darken and end the Prospect.

Here Paradise is restored, with its Tree of Life bearing immortal fruits. This, surely, is the Crown and Perfection of Happiness. My Claim to it is Promise, through the merits of Christ; my Disposition for it, Purity and Gratitude. Eternal Life is the Gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Those, Blessed be God, are my Helps to become Virtuous and Happy according

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to the *original design* of my Creation. They are *Helps* well suited to the wants and miseries of my Fallen State, and I rejoice to see that *where Sin did abound, Grace did much more abound.*² I would be for ever thankful that I have been bred up in a Religion, from whence I have received so many advantages for knowing my self, and answering the true Ends of my Existence. O may I ever value this Constitution of mercy and its Author, and testify it by a life of Obedience and Love!

How long shall I exist?

How long——Alas, *Duration and Stability* are not the *Qualities of Human Life!* And indeed since our Happiness is not *here*, we ought not to repine that our Existence is so short. Since this *flower* grows not below the Skies we should not be very fond of *struggling* with Frailty; of being *cheated* with vain Hopes and Desires; of *projecting* long extended Designs. The Experiment has been tried a thousand times, and nothing after all is found *solid* in Life, but Religion and Virtue; and yet we do not seem aware of this.

We complain that Life is short, *says the Philosopher*, and yet we have more of it than

² Rom. v. 20.

than we can tell what to do with. We are hurrying on from one Stage to another as if we should never see the End of the present. We find so little Satisfaction in what we *have enjoyed*, that we hope to be made amends by what is to *come*. Thus we hasten the *flow* of Life by wishing it to *flow faster*; and bring us to those *imaginary points of Rest*. * One while we extend Life by our Projects; and then shorten it by the *eagerness* of our Pursuit; and in the Evening lie down without any other Earnings, but the Weariness and Stripes of the Day.

Life is *short* compared with *Eternity*; and that *Eternal World* will shortly open upon us, yet so foolish are we, that we regard it as if it would never *begin*, and mind this present Life as if it would never *end*. Let us endeavour to be convinced of such palpable mistakes, and desire to affect our selves with the *real Brevity* of Human Life. So *short* is it, that you see in the Text it was not thought worth while to mention it between its Extremes, — *a time to be born — and a time to die*. Here is no notice of a *time to live*, either as being in it self too inconsiderable; or to leave it to

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every

* *Præcipitat quisque suam vitam et futuri Desiderio laborat, præsentium tædio. Sen. de Brev. Vit.*

every one to stamp his own Character upon it.

As some manage Life it is not worth recording. The Sum total of an indolent Life is a Cypher; to live in Anxiety, and a perpetual Care how to live, casts too strong a Shade upon Life; to live in Riot and Sin makes it all Darknefs. The Virtuous and Good only live, and even then when we come to make the necessary Deductions from the best Life, it vanishes like the morning dew, it is gone before we can well say we have lived.

Let us suppose that we were to reach the common Period of Life, our Threescore Years and Ten; Deduct from thence the time of Infancy, the time before the Understanding opens, or our Reason dawns; Deduct the time of Sleep so necessary to repair the continual wastes of Nature; Deduct the time that is due to the Demands of Appetite; the time, finally, of Old Age, when the Relishes of Life begin to wear away, and the Years draw nigh in which we shall say we have no pleasure; Deduct all those Periods, and how narrow and contracted will be the true Space of Life! What little Room shall we have to cultivate the Mind, or make a Progress in the Paths of Wisdom and Virtue! How little time

time to dispatch the *great the important Concern* for which we were born, to make *God* our friend, and secure the Blessings of the *Christian Covenant* as our *Portion* and *Inheritance!*

But really Life is not so *certain* as all this comes to. *Death* arms against it in every Stage, so that those Images of its weakness, that we meet with, do not *exceed* the Truth, it is *fading* as a *Flower*, *fleeing* as a *Shadow*, and passing away like a *Dream of the night*. Fond and vain are our hopes of Life, and yet we are continually surrounded with *Monuments* of its *frailty*. We see persons of all Ages and all Characters disappearing; *Our Fathers where are they? And the Prophets do they live for ever?*^a This is a truth that wants no *Pomp* of Language to illustrate, and the *Proofs* of it we feel continually in our selves.

We are all born under a *Sentence of Condemnation*, and Life is but a short *Reprieve* from the Execution of it. This is the sad *Effect* of the *First Sin*, and God thought fit to leave this *Mark* of his *Displeasure* against it upon all the Generations of Men. *By One man Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin; even so Death passed upon all Men.*^a

Nor

^a Zech. i. 5. ^a Rom. v. 12.

Nor let it seem *strange* that Sin should produce such *fatal consequences*, when we see, *even now*, how men's Vices shorten their lives, break the Order and Connection of Things, and convey a *Poison* to many Generations. And I wish it may not appear in the *Next Age*, that Human Nature is really weakened and sunk by the Vices of *This*.

My *Existence* then cannot be very long in the present World. *Death* will come and close every *gay and busy Scene*. This Enemy is inexorable, and not to be prevented by *Flattery* or *Force*. Not the *Cries* of Infants, or *Gaiety* of Youth—not the *Sufficiency* of Riches, or *Pomp* of Titles—not *Trophies* of Honour, or *Dignity* of Characters—not *Usefulness*, or *Piety* can discourage the approach of this Enemy.

Seeing then I cannot Extend my *Existence* as I please, let me improve it as I ought; not by indulging my *Curiosity* and *Taste*; not by sweating in a crowd for the *Conveniences* of Fortune; but by adorning it with every *wise and useful Quality*: Let me faithfully discharge the duties of

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Eheu, fugaces, Postume, Postume,

Labuntur anni: nec Pietas moram

Rugis et instanti Senectae,

Afferet indomitæque Morti.

Hor. Od. 2. 14. 1.

my *Character* and *Station*, leaving events to a *Superior Wisdom*, and guard against every thing that would tie me faster to a World I must shortly leave. The more my *Affections* twine about Earthly Things, the more difficult and painful must it be to disengage them when *Death* comes. I will then check those *eager desires* after *Riches*, *Honours*, and *Pleasures*, that I may not imbitter the enjoyment, or at *Death* reject the loss of them and my *Innocence* together. Amidst all our *Pleasures* there are none comparable to *Cheerfulness*, *Contentment*, and *Innocence*. And shall I to secure a *small share* of this World, destroy that Soul which is of more worth than the whole? *Is not the Soul more precious than the World?*

But though the present manner of my *Existence* cannot be long, yet it will not end and be quite *extinguished* at *Death*. There is something dismal and discouraging in the Thought. Were we here to have the *last Perception* of Truth; the *last Taste* of Pleasure; or the *last Endearment* of Friendship; was *Death* to be the wreck of all our *Hopes*, how dreadful would the apprehension be! *Exist* we shall after *Death* hath done his worst; and if we make *God* our *Friend* and secure the Blessings of His *Covenant*, it will be a *Happy Existence*. I would

I would then look upon my present portion of *Existence* as an Opportunity for preparing for *that other*; and would value the present state as it is conducive to the *Happiness* of the next. Let me not then injuriously accuse my *present Lot*, on account of the *Imperfections* and *Disorders* we are liable to, seeing I have at the same time so many *superior Advantages* put into my hands; seeing I have the hope of *Grace*, equal to my *Inabilities*, and of *Glory* far above my *Expectations*, or *Deserts*. Let my great care be to govern myself now by *Eternal Objects* and *Interests*; to walk in the *Light* of this *Faith*; and be ready to sacrifice, if necessary, the *Pleasures* of *Time* to those of *Eternity*.

Whatever I miss besides let me secure this *Hope*, this *Pleasing Hope* of *Immortality*. Thus let me jog on in *Life*, like a *Traveller* on the *Road*, content in the close of the *Day* to take a *short repose* in the *Grave*, from whence I might rise to *Eternal Day*, and feel immortal *Vigour* and *Life*.—I proceed to the
 III^d and last General Head, Which was
 to close this Discourse with some suitable
 improvement, more particularly with a
 view to the *New Year*, which we are
 entered upon, and that *Good Work* we
 are come to Encourage.

FIRST;

FIRST; I observe, from what has been discoursed, *that we shall never prize a Saviour, or be the better for the helps he has provided, unless we are first thoroughly convinced of our Sin and Misery.* A Perfect NATURAL STATE is not only dark and distressed *within*, but destitute of *outward Helps*. Blessed be God the *Christian Religion* has furnished us with *external means and helps*. By giving us the Gospel God has *delivered us from the Power of Darkness, and translated us into the Kingdom of his dear Son.*^d The Gospel is a great Blessing wherever it comes, and has mightily *improved our Reasoning*, how little Effect so ever it has had upon our *Morals*.

But still we have the *inward Characters* of a *Natural State*. And until we are convinced of our *Natural Impotency*; of the necessity of restraining and subduing our *animal Propensions*; of restoring the *rectitude and order* of our *Faculties*—until we see the sad Effects of the *Fall*, and the weight and burden of our own *Personal Sins*; until such Convictions possess us we are likely to remain *proud, incautious, and impenitent*. Our Saviour, whose offices are all relative to such a State, will be *undesired*; his *Grace unsought*; his *Sal-*

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vation

vation received with coldness and indifference. Yea, we shall nurse up our imperfections into Sins; cherish our Desires and Passions into Vices; and expose our selves to the tremendous Wrath of God. For when Lust hath conceived, hath obtained the consent of the Mind, it bringeth forth Sin; and Sin when it is finished bringeth forth Death.*

Let us study therefore to know what is in Man; his Weakness and Corruption; his Inability of himself to reach that Character of Holiness which the Gospel requires; his Ignorance of the Great Evil of Sin, whose fruit is Shame, and wages Death. Until we are convinced of these Things, we shall neither seek, nor prize the Remedies of Grace.

Do not we find in our selves the workings of a carnal earthly Mind; a strong propensity to a sensible World; the Power of Temptations when they assault us? Lord, what an impotent Creature is Man, in the presence of Temptations, without thy Grace!

* Jam. i. 15. The word Lust in English carries always, I think, an ill Sense with it. But the Greek Word from which it is translated has not that Malignity in it. *Ἐπιθυμία* signifies Desire in general; such as hath some Strength and Force in it; as *ἐπιθυμία ἐπιθυμῶνα*, with desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you. Luke. xxii. 15.—*τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχων*, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ. Philip. i. 23.

Grace! How soon are all his *Lights* Extinguished, his *Experiences* forgotten, his *Hopes* defaced! How voluntarily does he plunge himself into the bosom of a deceitful Lust; or yield to some reigning Passion! *David* and *Peter* are sad instances of this. We see how soon their boasted *Wisdom* and *Resolution* were overthrown, and could not stand before the *Temptation*.

Let us look a little into our selves and examine our present *moral Temper*; our natural, or contracted Weaknesses. *—Is there nothing to be corrected and amended there? Do not we want a greater *Elevation of Heart* above Sense and the World? And in our *careless hours* have we not forgotten our Duty, and for that Reason occasion to apprehend the Displeasure of God? If we have *no Sense* of these Things, the Exhortations of the Gospel will be without Effect. If we imagine that we are good enough already, we shall never seek to become better. *For they that be whole, or think themselves to be sound and healthy, need not the Physician, but they that are Sick.*^f

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 Te ipsumConcute, num qua tibi vitiorum in se verit olim
Natura, aut etiam Consuetudo mala.

 Hor. Sat. 1. 3. 34.^f Matt. ix. 12.

I have had my *time to be Born*, but I see I must be *Born again*, i. e. live above the Principles and views of *corrupt Nature* and a *sensible World*; acquire another tendency and bias, that may carry me to what is *rational, virtuous, and Divine*. This is what my *Saviour* and his *Grace* would bring me to. And have I the proper Evidences of this *Regenerate State*? Or different from all this, am I sunk into an *habitual deadness* and *carnality*? Do I live insensible to all the *views* and *issues* of life; live as if I should never die, and die as if I should never rise again?

“ *Almighty Grace*, quicken me in my
 “ duty, and convince me more and more
 “ of my *dependence*; refine my temper
 “ and exalt my views——*Blessed Saviour*,
 “ communicate of thy rich fulness to my
 “ Soul, that the *new Creature* may rise
 “ up, that old Things may be done
 “ away, and all Things become new; that
 “ I may have new Passions and new De-
 “ sires; a Soul continually breathing and
 “ aspiring towards thy Self, and the Fruits
 “ of thy Love.

It may possibly seem *strange* to us that any should be found to deny, and insult the *Redemption of the World by Jesus Christ*. It is more surprizing that so many should believe it *True*, and live at the same time

as if it was all *False*; should believe a *Heaven* and *Hell*; and be under no concern to avoid the *one*, and secure the *other*.—

There is something *more surprizing* yet, that is, when *Vice* borrows the features and language of *Virtue**; when *God* is dishonoured under forms of *Piety*, and *Religion* is wounded in the house of her *Friends*.

Whence doth this proceed, but from the secret *Pride* and *Flattery* of our *Hearts*; from self complacency and self confidence. We know nothing of our *imperfection* and *corruption*; and therefore go forth in our own *Strength*, live unguarded, and die secure.

Awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give Thee Light.†

He is a *Friend* both *able* and *willing* to help Thee. Beg of Him to enlighten thy *dark Mind*; subdue thy *stubborn Will*; rouse thy *sleepy Conscience*; and give Thee such an *humble Sense* of thy self, as may lead Thee to depend upon Him, and his guidance. And Bare with us when we come in our *Lord and Master's Name*; bare with our most pressing *Exhortations*; we mean no more than your *Happiness* and

* Fallit enim Vitium specie Virtutis & umbra,
Cum sit triste habitu, vultuque & veste severum.

Juv. Sat. 14. 109.

† Eph. v. 14.

and perfection. *Better* endure our importunities whilst they may be of use; *Better* be convinced of the *Truth* and *Importance* of these things now, than wait to be convinced by the *flaming Arguments* of the *Last Day*. *Now is the accepted Time; now is the Day of Salvation.*

SECONDLY; We may consider the Subject, as an *useful Meditation* for a *Birth Day*, or the *Beginning of a New Year*. Here are proper *Rests* for the *Mind*; Opportunities to make a *short Pause* in *Life*.

There is *Another Year* added to my *Life*. How short does it seem, now it is gone; and the same Period to come, how it extends itself beyond it! This, I conceive, proceeds from the *Imperfection* of my *Mind* in recollecting the *Transactions* of the *one*; and the *Power of Imagination* painting out various and fanciful *Scenes* in the *other*. After all the time to come may be much *shorter* than that which is *past*.

But what *Character* must I put upon that part of *Life* which is already *gone*? Have I been born to live, and answer the *Ends* of my *Being*? If my *Conscience* bears me this *Testimony*, an *habitual Comfort* will rise up in my *Soul* and my *Gratitude* to him who was the *Protector* and *Guide* of

of my Life.—*Probably* I see things *otherwise*; that here I declined in *Virtue*; here I fell into a *Mistake* and failed in my *Duty* to God and my fellow *Creatures*. *If so*, let me press my heart to *Humility* and *Repentance*, to better *Resolution* and greater *Watchfulness*, and to grow *wise* by my own *Experience*.

I am now entered upon a *New Computation* of time, the *Beginning* of a *New Year*; I would devote my *self* and *that* to the *Honour* of God and *Religion*. What *Changes* shall happen in my *self*, or others before this *Year* ends I cannot foresee. Whether I shall be distressed in my *Person*, *Friendships*, or *Fortune*. Whether *Success* shall crown my *enterprises*, and give me new *Abilities* and *Pleasures*. Which ever be the *case* I desire still to preserve my *Christian Temper*. I would be more *Humble* and *Useful* under all my *Advantages*; and when *Affliction* comes be decently resigned and submissive to the *Will of God*. I would still maintain an inviolable regard to *Truth* and *Justice*. I see *Life* so short and vain that it is not worth any man's while in this view to act a *different part*.

I have now *begun* another *Year*, but cannot say whether I shall reach the *end* of it. Many *died* the last *Year*, who were

as

as Healthy, as Young, as Gay as I am now, and who thought as little of a *change* of Worlds: I will not therefore depend much upon Life, or *boast my self of to Morrow*. If it be my *last* I hope it will be my *best*. That it may be so I would keep the best of Examples in my Eye, and do in my Sphere as my Saviour did, *glorify God on Earth, and finish the Work he has given me to do.*^h Then if I should see the *Close* of another Year, I may end it with this pleasing Reflection, *Now is my Salvation one Year nearer than when I first believed.*ⁱ

THIRDLY; We learn from hence, *the Benefit of a good Education, as it serves to awaken our Faculties, and guide them in their Exercise and Improvement. Human Nature left to itself without any Rule or Institution would soon turn Wild and Savage.* How many amongst our selves, who have been neglected this way, and left to follow the Course of Natural Inclinations, are *grossly Ignorant* and almost *Stupid*.

Education presents us with Objects to imploy our Faculties; leads us into various Scenes of Reflection; and invites the tender Mind to try her *Wings* and exert her *Power*. The knowledge of many things is requisite to *finish* a Character of *Good Sense*,

^h John xvii. 4. ⁱ Rom, xiii. 11.

Sense, and prepare for Business. But all *this* would avail nothing, if we lived *Strangers* to God and our *selves*, and were unacquainted with Spiritual and Eternal Objects; lived *Strangers* to the Obligations we are under to the *Son of God*. Our tender Minds should be impressed with these Things, that we may be *Virtuous* as well as *Prudent*, and take as much Care to approve our *selves* to God, as to our *Fellow-Creatures*. Young Minds taste *Pleasure* before they *see* *Truth*; and are lead by their *Senses* before their *Reason* can direct them. The *Reason* and *Experience* therefore of grown Persons must supply the Defect of theirs. The Discourse we have been upon will hint *Two Things* in this Affair of *Education*—*First*; To *Children*. You must submit to those that have the Care of you. They must check your irregular *Desires* and *Passions*. They must guard your *Speech* from *Indecency*, and bid you fly from those Things that would pollute the *Imagination*, or corrupt the *Heart*. * Do not therefore think those *Restraints* unreasonable, or unnecessary which are kindly intended for your good.—*Secondly*; To *Masters*. You should consider, that there are some *friendly Indications*

* Nil dictu scedum, visuque hæc limina tangat,
Intra quæ puer est—

Juv. Sat. 14. 44.

tions in Human Nature, such as the *Love of Truth*, the *Love of Praise*, &c. which if prudently managed would draw young Minds to their Duty, where *Force* and *Severity* would fail; and prove no more than the *Weakness* and *Imperfection* of their Guide.

FOURTHLY, and to Conclude; *Let us be as useful in our Stations as we can, and contribute to the Comfort of our Fellow-Creatures what we are able.* You have now some *necessitous Objects* before you, who have had their *Time to be born*, as well as you, though not your *Accommodations* and *Advantages*. They might have lived *Strangers* to the *Knowledge of God* and themselves, had not you kindly provided for their *Instruction*. Give me leave to beg the *Continuance* of your *Regards*, after I have read

The present State of the School.

“The Foundation of this School was
 “laid in the Year 1687, in the Reign of
 “James the Second, and upon this re-
 “markable Occasion.—One Poulton, a
 “Jesuit, had opened a School in these Parts,
 “and gave publick Notice that he would
 “teach the Children of the Poor gratis—
 “To prevent this apparent Mischief, and
 “give the Poor an easy Opportunity of
 “having their Children brought up in
 “the Protestant Way, Some Worthy
 Gen-

" Gentlemen^k then laid the first Design of this
 " School, and which has continued ever since.

" The Number of Scholars at first was
 " 40; afterwards it increased to 50; and
 " is now 140—They are here taught to
 " Read, Write, and are instructed in the
 " Assembly's Catechism, to qualify them for
 " the better Service of God and Man.

" It may be said to be the first School the
 " Protestant Dissenters were concerned in.
 " Here Objects are received without Di-
 " stinction of Party, the general Good be-
 " ing intended—It is situated in one of
 " the poorest Parts about the City, and the
 " Children of the poorest Sort of Water-
 " men and Fishermen are taught and
 " furnished with Bibles, Testaments, Cate-
 " chisms, Writing and Cyphering Books,
 " without any Expence to their Parents.
 " The Charges have been defrayed by
 " the Gifts and Subscriptions of private
 " Persons—By one Annual Collection
 " in this Place; and another in the City
 " —And by the kind Remembrances of
 " some Friends in their last Wills.

The Motive for setting up this School
 was just, to prevent the Spread of a Re-
 ligion, absurd in its self, oppressive to Li-
 berty, and dangerous to the Souls of Men.

H 2

Better

^k Mr. Arthur Shallet, Mr. Samuel Warburton,
 Mr. Ferdinando Holland; all Members of this
 Church in the Reverend Mr. Nath. Vincent's time.

Better Men were left to the Force of *Natural Principles*, than be so *abused* with the Name of Religion.

Besides preventing this *Mischief*, it has promoted a great deal of *Good* among the poorer Sort; informing them in the Knowledge and Duties of Religion, without any *Study of Parties*; and rendering them more useful to Society, without raising them *too high* above their Station.—

This Design cannot be carried on without the Continuance of your *Favour* and *Liberality*. I presume there is no need of using many Words to encourage a *Design* so apparently useful; and a *Trust* so honourably discharged. I beg leave therefore just to observe these *Two* or *Three* Things.

In the first Place; Those Objects before you have the *same Nature* with your selves; though the *same Nature* a little in *disguise*. They have the same Composition of *Soul* and *Body*; the *same* Rational Powers, and wonderful Structure of Animal Nature.

He fashioneth their Hearts alike. On this Account they claim your Regards as a Piece of *Humanity*. They only differ from you in the *variable Accidents* of Being, having not your *Ease*, and *Accommodations*.

Again; I would observe that there is a great deal of *Pleasure* in doing these kind Offices to our Fellow-Creatures; *Exalted Pleasure*.

Pleasure. We form a kind of little *Providence* about our selves for the Refreshment and Consolation of others; and in dispensing our *comforting Influences*, shew a *noble Elevation* of Spirit.—It is the true Foundation of *Esteem*. A man may be *admired* for his Riches, and the Extent of his Fortune; he may be *Envied* for his Pomp and Equipage; but these Things are never the *Ground* of *Love* and *Esteem*. It is only *Goodness* and *Beneficence* can insinuate into the *Affections* of another, and command the *Heart*. He therefore that would wear a large Fortune with *Dignity* and *Honour*, must do it with a large and generous Soul. *——The *Reflection* on such acts of Kindness will give new *Pleasures*. On the Review of any Day, to be able only to say, *this Day I have pleased my Curiosity and Taste; this Day I have indulged my Ease and Pleasures*, will not give half the Satisfaction and Joy, as to be able to say, *this Day I have contributed to the Spread of Knowledge and Virtue; this Day I have fed the Hungry, clothed the Naked, and made the Widow's Heart to sing for Joy.*^m In the one Case a Man contracts

* Nullus argento color est, avaris
Abditæ terris inimice laminae,
Crispe Sallusti, nisi temperato
Splendeat usu.

Hor. Od. 2. 2. 1.

† Job xxix, 13,

tracts both his Influence and Pleasure; in the other he gives them a noble Expansion.

Finally; Consider the *Acceptableness of such Sacrifices*. The great Author of all our Blessings will acknowledge our *Charity* as a real Testimony of our *Gratitude*. The *Blessed Redeemer* will own it as an *Obligation* upon himself.

Inasmuch as ye have done it to These, you have done it to Me.ⁿ What could I say less, on this Occasion; and what can I say more——

In being kind to others you are answering *one End* of your own *Existence*, and providing for your selves *sure Comforts*.

You are approving your selves to Him, who can requite your Labours of Love a *Thousand Ways*——May this be always *One*, to give you Joy and *Comfort* in your Children and dearest Relatives.

But remember, *I Beseech you*, that it is not *sufficient* to your own Personal Happiness, that your *Publick Character* shine with Great Virtues. You must be *Holy*, as well as *Charitable*. And when *Charity* proceeds from a *pure Heart*, a good *Conscience*, and *Faith unfeigned*, it will double the present Pleasure of Giving, and increase the Weight and Splendour of your Future Crown.

^a Matt. xxv. 40.

^o 1 Tim. i. 5.